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Watergate figure denies JFK murder

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Conspiracy author and attorney Mark Lane entered a Miami courtroom Monday to prove that Watergate figure E. Howard Hunt and the CIA assassinated John F. Kennedy.

Lane's star witness swears that she and other conspirators met Hunt in Dallas the day before Kennedy was shot.

But she won't come to Miami to testify.

Lane's key piece of evidence is a CIA memo that suggests that Hunt was in Dallas and involved in the murder.

But he doesn't have the fabled memo.

The trial before U.S. District Judge James Kehoe is Hunt's libel suit against the ultra-right Liberty Lobby. In 1978, the group's "Spotlight" tabloid printed an article implying that Hunt was an active participant in Kennedy's murder when he was a CIA agent.

In 1981, Hunt won a \$650,000 verdict against Liberty Lobby, but the judgment was overturned on a legal technicality. He is back in court this week to try again, with Lane representing the defense.

As the first witness, Hunt spent his first day on the stand in a trip down memory lane.

He reminisced candidly about the burglary of the Watergate office complex for President Nixon. He talked about rifling the files of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist. He mentioned covert "black bag" break-ins at foreign embassies for the CIA. He blandly described his plan to put cyanide in columnist Jack Anderson's aspirin bottle.

But he resolutely denied having any part in any conspiracy to assassinate Kennedy.

"Venomous libel," Hunt says acidly of claims that he played a role in Kennedy's death.

He testified that he was in Washington that day, buying Chinese food with his wife, when he heard of the tragedy in Dallas. And unlike Lane, Hunt's lawyers say, they will offer witnesses and evidence to prove their case.

Lane is perhaps the nation's most notorious conspiracy buff. His best-selling *Rush To Judgment* criticized the Warren Commission's conclusion that Kennedy was shot by a lone assassin.

Though Lane's own credibility has been questioned over the years, he was eager Monday to link Hunt to the murder, which he says grew out of the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

"The whole CIA blamed John Kennedy," Lane told the six-member jury. "Kennedy fired [CIA director] Allen Dulles, and then Kennedy was killed."

Despite Hunt's denials, various authors have claimed that Hunt and fellow Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis were two of the never-identified "three bums" photographed near where Kennedy was shot.

Lane has a sworn deposition from Marita Lorenz, a onetime mistress of Fidel Castro and later a CIA agent. Lorenz claims that she drove to from Miami to Dallas with Sturgis and several Cubans the day before Kennedy was shot. She says they met Hunt there.

But Lorenz's story won't be told in person. "She is afraid to come to Miami," Lane said.